



WORKING DAY GETS LONGER AS COMMUTE TIMES INCREASE

Idaho's average work day is getting longer as the population expands two to three times faster than the nation and Idahoans remain unwavering in their love affair with their cars and trucks.

They may still be working just eight hours, but they are spending more time getting to and from the job, and they are getting up earlier to make it in on time. The extra minutes are turning into extra hours as sprawl lengthens commutes and congested roads slow them down.

The Society for Human Resource Management says lengthening commutes compounded by their increased likelihood of negotiating construction, waiting out accidents or dealing with other delays erode workers' time for leisure or just sleep. Longer commutes can reduce productivity while more vehicle emissions worsen air quality and increase health risks to workers.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the average commuting time for the state's 675,000 workers in mid-2006 was just a few seconds over 20 minutes one way – 40 minutes going and coming. The round trip was almost two minutes longer in the Coeur d'Alene metropolitan area and three minutes more in the sprawling Boise metro area.

While workers in 40 other states had longer commutes – over 30 minutes each way in New York and Maryland – the commute for Idaho's work force has been getting longer and longer – especially in the bigger cities like Boise where traffic congestion is becoming a serious byproduct of population growth.

Compared to six other U.S. metro areas ranging within 25,000 either side of Boise's mid-2006 population of 567,000, the average commute in and around Boise was longer than the commutes in Wichita, Kan.; Madison, Wis.; Youngstown, Ohio, and Scranton, Pa. Only the two Florida areas – Fort Myers and Lakeland – had commutes over 21½ minutes one way.

FYI Table 1: Average One-Way Metro Commute Times, 2006

Metro Areas	Time	Population
Madison, Wis.	20.0	543,022
Scranton--Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	20.8	550,841
Lakeland, Fla.	25.1	561,606
Boise City-Nampa, Idaho	21.5	567,640
Cape Coral-Fort Myers, Fla.	26.0	571,344
Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, Ohio & Pa.	20.1	586,939
Wichita, Kan.	18.5	592,126

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In 1990, the average commute statewide, including Idaho's biggest urban area around Boise, was under 17 and a half minutes. By 2000 it had hit 20 and has hovered there statewide while continuing to rise in the Boise area.

That may not seem much of an increase – less than three minutes one way or six minutes back and forth. But over the course of 238 days on the job, it means workers

are spending over 22 more hours a year getting to work and going back home than they did 16 years earlier. Add another 11 hours for workers in the state's largest urban area.

Nationally, the average commute increased 20½ hours a year. Twenty-eight other states saw their average commutes increase less than Idaho, reflecting Idaho's comparatively rapid population growth and strong economic expansion.

And that lengthening commute has workers getting up earlier. In 1990, 34 percent of Idaho workers left home between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. while only 23 percent left before 6 a.m.

Now, less than 29 percent head for their jobs between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. while 30 percent leave the house before 6.

But the averages don't tell the whole story.

In 1990, over 52 percent of the workers throughout the state took less than 15 minutes to get to work, and most of them took less than 10. That includes the nearly 5 percent of the labor force that worked at home. Almost 60 percent of rural workers lived less than 15 minutes from work – that includes farmers and ranchers – while only 48 percent of workers lived that close in the metro areas of Boise, Coeur d'Alene, Pocatello, Idaho Falls and Twin Falls.

At the same time, just over 30 percent spent more than 20 minutes getting to work with 8 percent spending over 40 minutes commuting one way.

In 2006, however, only 44 percent of workers were within 15 minutes of their jobs while 40 percent commuted more than 20 minutes with over 11 percent traveling at least 40 minutes. In the urban areas, only 40 percent still lived less than 15 minutes from work while over 53 percent of rural worker remained that close.

Not surprisingly considering the strong streak of independence running through most Idahoans, joining forces with others in carpools or turning to alternative transportation where available has not occurred even as fuel prices have skyrocketed from an average of 88 cents a

FYI Table 2: When Idahoans Go To Work

Time of Day	1990	2006
Midnight to 4:59 a.m.	2.28%	4.13%
5:00 a.m. to 5:29 a.m.	1.88%	3.04%
5:30 a.m. to 5:59 a.m.	3.30%	4.55%
6:00 a.m. to 6:29 a.m.	6.18%	7.54%
6:30 a.m. to 6:59 a.m.	9.51%	10.48%
7:00 a.m. to 7:29 a.m.	14.33%	13.34%
7:30 a.m. to 7:59 a.m.	19.53%	15.45%
8:00 a.m. to 8:29 a.m.	10.85%	9.30%
8:30 a.m. to 8:59 a.m.	5.04%	5.17%
9:00 a.m. to 9:59 a.m.	5.05%	5.52%
10:00 a.m. to 10:59 a.m.	2.18%	2.74%
11:00 a.m. to 11:59 a.m.	1.19%	1.45%
Noon to 3:59 p.m.	6.94%	5.97%
4:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m.	7.04%	6.29%
Worked at home	4.70%	5.02%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

gallon for regular gasoline to \$2.50 a gallon during the summer of 2006. They have continued to rise since.

In fact, carpooling has gone in the other direction, but not as much as in most other states.

The Census Bureau estimates just under 11 percent of workers got to their jobs on public transportation or alternatives like motorcycles, bicycles or walking in 2006 while 11.6 percent carpoolled. The rest – almost four of every five workers – drove alone in their cars, pickups or SUVs.

Sixteen years earlier, over 12 percent of workers carpoolled, and another 13 percent used alternatives. Fewer than three of every four workers drove alone.

But in that time Idaho moved from the bottom third of the states in percent of workers carpooling – 38th – to the top third – 16th.

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FYI Table 3: Percent of Idaho Workers Within Specific One-Way Commute Times

Travel Time	Metropolitan Areas		Rural Areas		Statewide	
	1990	2006	1990	2006	1990	2006
Under 10 Minutes	25.45%	21.29%	42.17%	36.08%	31.81%	25.82%
10 to 15 Minutes	22.20%	18.70%	17.32%	17.38%	20.34%	18.31%
15 to 20 Minutes	19.24%	17.59%	13.34%	12.54%	17.00%	16.03%
20 to 40 Minutes	25.30%	31.80%	17.90%	20.71%	22.49%	28.40%
over 40 Minutes	7.81%	10.62%	9.27%	13.29%	8.36%	11.44%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau